



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

Proposed Fishing Regulation Changes for 2016

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Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

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Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

STATEWIDE –Multiple Fishing Districts

Live bait use clarifications: Specify fish species that can be used as bait, rather than list those that can not. Q4

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Definitions

LIVE BAIT: *Live bait are animals such as meal worms, red worms, night crawlers, leeches, maggots, crayfish, reptiles, amphibians and insects, which may be used as live bait on all waters not restricted to artificial flies and lures. Live bait includes fish only as specified in Live Bait sections for the Central and Eastern Fishing Districts. No live fish can be used as live bait in the Western Fishing District. Sculpins may not be used as bait live or dead in the Western Fishing District.*

WESTERN DISTRICT

Page 23

Bait Regulations

Live Bait

- *Live bait fish may not be imported into Montana without authorization from FWP.
- *Live animals such as meal worms, red worms, night crawlers, leeches, maggots, crayfish, reptiles, amphibians and insects may be used as bait on all waters not restricted to artificial lures only. Leeches may only be imported into Montana from FWP-approved leech dealers. Anglers who import leeches must have in their possession a bill-of-sale (*a receipt*) from the approved out-of-state leech dealer when fishing with leeches in Montana. A list of approved out-of-state leech dealers may be obtained from FWP by calling 406-444-6181.
- * *No Fish species may be used as live bait in the Western Fishing District.*

CENTRAL DISTRICT

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Bait Regulations

Live Bait

- *Live bait fish may not be imported into Montana, except by permit for use in Bighorn Lake and Afterbay reservoir. Bait fish collected in the Bighorn River drainage of Wyoming may be imported under a permit issued by FWP. For a permit, contact the FWP Fisheries Division at 2300 Lake Elmo Drive, Billings, MT 59105 or call (406) 247-2940.
- *Live animals such as meal worms, red worms, night crawlers, leeches, maggots, crayfish, reptiles, amphibians and insects may be used as bait on all waters not restricted to artificial lures only. Leeches may only be imported into Montana from FWP-approved leech dealers. Anglers who import leeches must have in their possession a bill-of-sale (*a receipt*) from the approved out-of-state leech dealer when fishing with leeches in Montana. A list of approved out-of-state leech dealers may be obtained from FWP by calling 406-444-6181.
- **Fish species* ~~Non-game fish~~ that may be *collected and* used as live bait in the Central Fishing District include *only the following: Fathead Minnow, Flathead Chub, Western Silvery Minnow, Plains Minnow, Emerald Shiner, Longnose Dace, Lake Chub, Creek Chub, Longnose Sucker, and White Sucker.* ~~all non-game species except black bullheads, bluegill, carp, goldfish, green sunfish, pumpkinseed, rainbow smelt, sculpins, stonecats, yellow bullheads.~~
- *~~Live non-game fish~~ These species may be used as live bait only in the following waters:

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~striketrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

(CONTINUES ...)

EASTERN DISTRICT**Page 77****Bait Regulations****Live Bait**

- *Live bait fish may not be imported into Montana.
- *Live animals such as meal worms, red worms, night crawlers, leeches, maggots, crayfish, reptiles, amphibians and insects may be used as bait on all waters not restricted to artificial lures only. Leeches may only be imported into Montana from FWP-approved leech dealers. Anglers who import leeches must have in their possession a bill-of-sale (*a receipt*) from the approved out-of-state leech dealer when fishing with leeches in Montana. A list of approved out-of-state leech dealers may be obtained from FWP by calling 406-444-6181.
- ****Fish species*** ~~Non-game fish that may be collected and used as live bait in the Eastern~~ ***Fishing*** District include ~~all non-game species except black bullheads, bluegill, carp, goldfish, green sunfish, pumpkinseed, rainbow smelt, sculpins, stonecats, yellow bullheads, shortnose gar, sturgeon chub, sicklefin chub, Northern redbelly dace, blue sucker, and pearl dace.~~ ***only the following: Fathead Minnow, Flathead Chub, Western Silvery Minnow, Plains Minnow, Emerald Shiner, Longnose Dace, Lake Chub, Creek Chub, Longnose Sucker, and White Sucker***
- *~~Live non-game fish~~ These species may be used as live bait only in the following waters:
 - Bighorn Lake and Afterbay Reservoir
 - Bighorn River – Afterbay Dam to cable 600 feet downstream, and downstream from the Bighorn FAS.
 - Clarks Fork Yellowstone River *and tributaries* – downstream from the bridge at Bridger
 - Marias River and tributaries downstream from I-15
 - Missouri River downstream from Morony Dam
 - Muddy Creek Drainage near Vaughn, including all streams and drainage canals
 - Teton River and tributaries downstream from I-15
 - Tiber Reservoir (Lake Elwell), Toole, and Liberty counties.
 - Yellowstone River and all streams and ditches in the drainage downstream from the mouth of the Clarks Fork (except the section of the Bighorn River between the cable 600 feet downstream from Afterbay Dam and the Bighorn FAS).

(CONTINUES ...)

RATIONALE: In current regulations, providing a list of species not to be used as live bait only indirectly identifies the fish that can be used, which can create angler confusion. Designating the species allowed encourages proper species identification, helps limit harm to non-target non-game species, and encourages the use of the more abundant bait species. Observations of live bait used by anglers, collected by commercial bait seiners, and sold by vendors, reflect that a much smaller list of species is what people actually collect and use. The proposed list is predominately what is collected from most waters. This regulation change will require adding the approved species list to ARM rule 12.7.201, and changing the approved species list for commercial bait seining permits issued for regions 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

CENTRAL DISTRICT – District Standard Regulation
EASTERN DISTRICT – District Standard Regulation

Specify Catfish species in both Central and Eastern Fishing District standard regulations. Q5

Page 51

Central District Standard Daily and Possession Limits

Species

Channel Catfish

Page 82

Eastern District Standard Daily and Possession Limits

Species

Channel Catfish

RATIONALE: This change eliminates species ambiguity.

CENTRAL DISTRICT – Region 5
EASTERN DISTRICT – Region 5

Reduce harvest limits for Channel Catfish in the Musselshell River. Q6

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MUSSELHELL RIVER

Downstream from where North and South forks meet

~~Open entire year.~~

Channel catfish: 10 daily and in possession.

RATIONALE: Anglers have expressed concern over the potential overharvest of large catfish from the Musselshell River under current Central and Eastern Fishing District standard regulations that allow 10 fish daily, 20 in possession. The proposed change reduces possession limit in both Districts.

Active fisheries conservation efforts, including improving fish passage, enhancing habitat, increasing monitoring, and potentially restocking native fish such as Sauger and Channel Catfish in the upper river, are ongoing now to reestablish native fish runs in the Musselshell River. The proposed regulation changes reduce harvest limits slightly for both species, to protect and support fish production during the rebuilding process.

Note: New language is in colored ***italics***. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

CENTRAL DISTRICT – REGIONS 3 AND 5
EASTERN DISTRICT – Region 7

Increase Smallmouth Bass harvest limit for the Yellowstone River. Q7

New Exception

YELLOWSTONE RIVER

Entire River

Smallmouth Bass: 10 daily and in possession

RATIONALE: The proposed regulation increases angler opportunity, and is intended to help reduce Smallmouth Bass abundance, relieve competition with other species, and to reduce the rate of Smallmouth Bass expansion upstream. This new exception would replace the Central and Eastern Fishing District standards: 5 daily and in possession.

WESTERN DISTRICT –District Standard Regulation

Reduce Western District standard harvest limit for Burbot from 5 to 2 daily and in possession. Q9

Page 24

SPECIES

Burbot (Ling): 2 daily and in possession ~~5 daily and in possession~~

RATIONALE: Burbot populations in the Western Fishing District are generally lower in abundance now compared to historic levels. Reduced harvest will potentially increase spawner numbers. Our goal is to further protect these populations now so that a strong spawning population may again provide improved harvest opportunities.

Increase Western Fishing District standard harvest length limit for Cutthroat Trout in rivers and streams. Q10

Page 24

Cutthroat Trout

Rivers and Streams

3 daily and in possession, none over **12** ~~10~~ inch

RATIONALE: Length limit for Cutthroat Trout in current regulations is 12 inches in the Wilderness and 10 inches otherwise. This proposal would use 12 inches as the standard length limit for Cutthroat Trout in all rivers and streams in the Western Fishing District. Uniformity of regulations where feasible and appropriate aids angler understanding and compliance.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Increase Western Fishing District standard harvest limits for Lake Trout. Q11

Page 24

Lake Trout

20 daily and 40 in possession ~~10 daily and in possession~~

RATIONALE: FWP Lake Trout management goals include providing harvest opportunity and reducing their numbers where appropriate to benefit other fish species. By increasing the Western Fishing District standard limit for lake trout, FWP can avoid the need to add multiple new exceptions in cases where greater harvest is desired than allowed by the current limit. With an increased harvest limit, FWP can also remove some current exceptions, reducing the total number of regulations.

The 20 fish daily harvest level proposed here is the same as is currently allowed for other game fish including whitefish, salmon, and brook trout in the Western Fishing District standard harvest limits. Adding to regulation uniformity should also aid angler understanding and compliance.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Add single point barbless hook restriction to streams in the Western Fishing District currently designated catch and release and artificial lures only, where Cutthroat Trout are the primary species meant to be protected by the restrictions Q12.

New Exceptions

COPPER CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)

Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.

Artificial, single point barbless hook lures only.

DUNHAM CREEK (tributary to Monture Creek, Blackfoot drainage)

Catch and release for all trout.

Artificial, single point barbless hook lures only.

FISH CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES (Clark Fork River Drainage)

Mainstem downstream of the confluence of the South and West forks

Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.

Artificial, single point barbless hook lures only

GOLD CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)

Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.

Artificial, single point barbless hook lures only.

MONTURE CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)

Catch and release for all trout.

Artificial, single point barbless hook lures only.

NORTH FORK BLACKFOOT RIVER (tributary to Blackfoot River)

Entire River

Catch and release for all trout.

Downstream from the North Fork Falls

Artificial, single point barbless hook lures only.

RATTLESNAKE CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES (near Missoula)

Entire River

Catch and release for all trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, none over 15 inches.

Artificial, single point barbless hook lures only.

SOUTH FORK FLATHEAD RIVER DRAINAGE

Meadow Creek Bridge to Spotted Bear foot bridge and tributaries

Catch and release only.

Artificial, single point barbless hook lures only.

RATIONALE: This regulation is intended to reduce stress on cutthroat trout. The regulation would still allow up to 2 hooks per line. Cutting off points and flattening barbs is permitted to match lures to the regulation requirement.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

CENTRAL DISTRICT – District Standard Regulation

Add 1 Cutthroat Trout to the combined trout limit. Many exceptions eliminated. Q14

Page 51

2016 2015 General Fishing Season

Central District Standard Daily and Possession Limits

Combined Trout - includes Brown Trout, Rainbow Trout, Golden Trout, *Cutthroat Trout*, and Grayling

Rivers and Streams: 5 daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches, *only 1 can be a Cutthroat Trout.*

If Combined Trout Limit is adopted, these exceptions could be eliminated:

Page 52

BAD CANYON CREEK

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

BADGER CREEK DRAINAGE (near Heart Butte)

~~Downstream from confluence of North Badger and South Badger creeks within National Forest~~

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, only 1 over 12 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

Page 54

BIG HOLE RIVER TRIBUTARIES

~~Tributaries upstream from Divide Bridge (Divide FAS)~~

Brook trout: Open entire year.

~~Catch-and-release for Grayling and Cutthroat Trout~~

Page 57

CLARKS FORK YELLOWSTONE RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES

~~Entire river and tributaries~~

Open entire year.

Combined Trout: Includes cutthroat Trout.

CROOKED CREEK (Pryor Mountains)

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Page 58

DEARBORN RIVER

Open third Saturday in May through November 30.

~~Upstream from highway 434 Bridge in T18N, R6W, Section 29~~

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, only 1 over 12 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

Page 58

EAST BOULDER RIVER (Yellowstone River Drainage)

Open entire year.

~~Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.~~

EAST FORK BOULDER RIVER (near Big Timber)

Open entire year.

~~Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.~~

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Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

EAST ROSEBUD CREEK

Open entire year.

~~Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.~~

FISHTAIL CREEK

Open entire year.

~~Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.~~

Page 66

~~PINEY CREEK (Pryor Mountains)~~

~~Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.~~

Page 68

SHIELDS RIVER

Extended season for whitefish and catch-and-release for trout open December 1 to third Saturday in May with artificial lures and/or maggots only.

~~Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.~~

SOUTH FORK SUN RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES

Upstream from the point where the North and South forks of the Sun River meet, regardless of reservoir level

~~Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, only 1 over 12 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout~~

Page 71

WEST BOULDER RIVER (near Big Timber)

Open entire year.

~~Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout~~

WEST FORK STILLWATER RIVER

Open entire year.

~~Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout~~

WEST ROSEBUD CREEK

Open entire year.

~~Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout~~

Page 72

YELLOWSTONE RIVER

Open entire year.

Combined Trout: 4 Brown Trout and/or Rainbow Trout daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches. ~~Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.~~

YELLOWSTONE RIVER TRIBUTARIES

All tributaries downstream from Springdale

Open entire year.

Combine Trout: includes Cutthroat Trout (unless indicated otherwise in tributary exceptions).

If the new Combined Trout Limit is adopted, we also propose these modifications to existing exceptions (deleting some language, adding new):

Page 56

BOULDER RIVER and Tributaries (near Big Timber)

Entire river and tributaries

Open entire year.

~~Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout~~

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

River and Tributaries from the mouth upstream to Hawley Creek

Combined Trout: Only 1 fish over 14 inches.

River and Tributaries upstream of Hawley Creek

Combined Trout: Only 1 fish over 14 inches; may include 3 Cutthroat Trout.

Page 66

NORTH FORK TETON RIVER DRAINAGE (near Choteau)

Within the National Forest

Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout. Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, none over 12 inches.

New Exception

SHEEP CREEK (tributary to Missouri River south of Cascade)

Open third Saturday in May through Labor Day.

New Exception

SOUTH FORK TETON RIVER DRAINAGE (near Choteau)

Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout

Page 67

SAGE CREEK (Pryor Mountains)

Open entire year.

Combined Trout: ***May include 5 Cutthroat Trout.*** ~~includes Cutthroat Trout.~~

Page 70

STILLWATER RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES (Yellowstone River Drainage)

Entire river and tributaries

Open entire year.

Combined Trout: ***Only 1 fish over 14 inches*** ~~2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout~~

NOTE: Most of the exceptions listed above would change further if the Central Fishing District standard proposal to leave Rivers and Streams open all year is also adopted. The effect would be to further reduce the number of regulation exceptions.

RATIONALE. This change adds 1 Cutthroat Trout to the combined Trout Limit. This change is proposed based partly on successful conservation efforts that allow cutthroat harvest again in many rivers and streams without threat to the persistence of these populations. A cutthroat in the allowed harvest can also simplify issues of hybrid fish identification wherein the cutthroat slash does not require releasing a fish that is strongly suspected to be a hybrid with other trout species. Increasing angling opportunity based on successful conservation and expanding harvest opportunities into many tributaries where alternative species may not be available increases angler access to these public resources, as well as angling opportunities and satisfaction. An additional benefit of this change is that many regulation exceptions could be eliminated. Fewer number and more uniform regulations aid angler understanding and compliance.

Note: New language is in colored ***italics***. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Rivers and Streams to remain open all year; Many exceptions to be eliminated. Q15

Page 51

2016 ~~2015~~ General Fishing Season

Central District : Rivers and Streams

Open entire year. Open third Saturday in May through November 30, unless otherwise specified in ~~Exceptions to Standard Regulations.~~

Exceptions to be eliminated:

Page 52

~~ALDER GULCH CREEK AND DREDGE PONDS~~

~~Virginia City to mouth~~

~~Open Entire Year.~~

~~ARMSTRONG SPRING CREEK—~~

~~Open entire year.~~

~~Catch-and-release only.~~

~~Artificial lures only.~~

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~~BEAVERHEAD RIVER~~

~~Downstream from Pipe Organ Bridge~~

~~Open entire year.~~

Page 54

~~BELT RIVER~~

~~Downstream from the Riceville Bridge~~

~~Open entire year.~~

~~BIG HOLE RIVER~~

~~Entire River~~

~~Extended season for whitefish and catch and release for trout open December 1 to the third Saturday in May with artificial lures and/or maggots only.~~

~~All float users are limited to a total of 2 launches at or near each official access site each day. See Big Hole River map for official access sites.~~

~~Headwaters to North Fork Big Hole River~~

~~Brook Trout: Open entire year.~~

~~BIG HOLE RIVER TRIBUTARIES~~

~~Tributaries upstream from Divide Bridge (Divide FAS)~~

~~Brook Trout: Open entire year.~~

~~Catch and release for Grayling and Cutthroat Trout.~~

Page 55

~~BIG SPRING CREEK (near Lewistown)~~

~~Entire creek~~

~~Open entire year.~~

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Page 56

BIGHORN RIVER

Entire River

~~Open entire year.~~

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, only 1 may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, only 2 may be Sauger.

A State of Montana fishing license is required for all anglers to fish on the Bighorn River within the boundaries of the Crow Reservation. A tribal permit is not required.

BLUEWATER CREEK

~~Open entire year.~~

BOULDER RIVER and Tributaries (near Big Timber)

Entire river and tributaries

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

Page 57

CLARKS FORK YELLOWSTONE RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES

Entire river and tributaries

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: includes Cutthroat Trout.

CUT BANK CREEK

~~Open entire year downstream of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation boundary in T33N, R6W, S2.~~

Page 58

DARLINGTON SPRING CREEK aka Darlington Ditch (near Three Forks)

On Cobblestone FAS

~~Open entire year.~~

Catch-and-release for trout.

Artificial lures only.

Outside of Cobblestone FAS boundaries—

~~Open entire year.~~

Central Fishing District standard limits apply.

EAST BOULDER RIVER (Yellowstone River Drainage)

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

EAST FORK BOULDER RIVER (near Big Timber)

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

EAST GALLATIN RIVER

~~Open entire year downstream from the mouth of Bozeman (Sourdough) Creek.~~

Northern Pike: No limit.

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EAST ROSEBUD CREEK

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

FISHTAIL CREEK

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

GALLATIN RIVER

Entire river

~~Open entire year downstream from the mouth of Bozeman (Sourdough) Creek.~~

Northern Pike: No limit

Page 60

HYALITE CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES

Below Hyalite Reservoir

~~Open third Saturday in May through November 30.~~

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Page 62

MADISON RIVER

~~Hebgen Dam to Quake Lake~~

~~Open entire year.~~

Quake Lake outlet to Lyons Bridge

~~Open third Saturday in May through the end of February.~~

Catch-and-release for trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* and may take 1 trout daily and in possession, any size.

Artificial lures only.

Closed to fishing from boats/vessels.

Lyons Bridge to McAtee Bridge

~~Open third Saturday in May through the end of February.~~

Catch-and-release for trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* and may take 1 trout daily and in possession, any size.

Artificial lures only.

McAtee Bridge to Varney Bridge

~~Open entire year.~~

Catch-and-release for trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* and may take 1 trout daily and in possession, any size.

Artificial lures only.

Varney Bridge to Ennis Bridge

~~Open entire year.~~

Catch-and-release for trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* and may take 1 trout daily and in possession, any size.

Ennis Bridge to to Ennis Lake

~~Open third Saturday in May through the end of February.~~

Catch-and-release for trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* and may take 1 trout daily and in possession, any size.

Closed to fishing from boats/vessels

Ennis Dam to the mouth

~~Open entire year.~~

Northern Pike: No limit.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Page 62

MILL CREEK (near Sheridan)

~~Open entire year.~~

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MUSSELSHELL RIVER

~~Downstream from where North and South Forks meet~~

~~Open entire year.~~

NELSON SPRING CREEK

~~Open entire year.~~

Catch-and-release only.

Artificial lures only.

Page 67

Poindexter slough

~~Open entire year.~~

Catch-and-release December 1 to third Saturday in May with artificial lures only.

~~PRYOR CREEK~~

~~Downstream from the Reservation line~~

~~Open entire year.~~

ROCK CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES (tributary to Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River)

West Fork Rock Creek is closed to fishing from the Red Lodge water intake to 1,000 feet upstream.

~~Open entire year.~~

RUBY RIVER

Downstream from Ruby Dam

Closed entire year just below Ruby Dam (that portion of the Ruby River from its confluence with the Ruby Dam outlet channel upstream to the dam, including the outlet channel).

~~Extended season for whitefish and catch-and-release for trout open December 1 to the third Saturday in May with artificial lures and/or maggots only.~~

SAGE CREEK (Pryor Mountains)

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined trout include Cutthroat Trout.

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SHIELDS RIVER

~~Extended season for whitefish and catch-and-release for trout open December 1 to the third Saturday in May with artificial lures and/or maggots only.~~

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

SMITH RIVER

Downstream from confluence of North and South Forks

~~Open entire year.~~

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STILLWATER RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES (Yellowstone River Drainage)

Entire River and tributaries

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Page 70

SUN RIVER

~~Open entire year downstream from Gibson Dam.~~

TETON RIVER

~~Downstream from Highway 89 Bridge~~

~~Open entire year.~~

WARM SPRINGS CREEK (near Lewistown)

~~Open entire year.~~

Page 71

WEST BOULDER RIVER (near Big Timber)

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

WEST FORK STILLWATER RIVER

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

WEST ROSEBUD CREEK

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

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YELLOWSTONE RIVER

~~Yellowstone National Park (YNP) Boundary to I-90 Bridge at Billings~~

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 4 Brown Trout and/or Rainbpw Trout daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches, catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

~~All tributaries downstream from Springdale~~

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: includes Cutthroat Trout (unless indicated otherwise in tributary exceptions).

RATIONALE. This change matches the Central Fishing District standard to the current Eastern Fishing District standard, aiding regulation uniformity, including the consequence that many current regulation exceptions in Regions 3, 4, and 5 can be eliminated. A majority of the streams in the Central Fishing District are already open the entire year – by regulation exception. This change simply reverses the situation, reducing the number of exceptions to a single District Wide standard. Where necessary to protect fisheries, exceptions for season closures are already in place; these exceptions would not be affected.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

EASTERN DISTRICT – District Standard Regulation

Add Tongue River Reservoir Dam to Eastern District Dam Closures and Restrictions. Q17

Page 74

Eastern District Standard Regulations

Dam Closures and Restrictions

The following dams are closed to all boating, sailing, floating, swimming, fishing or other recreational activity as marked by boat restraining systems or as posted to restrict access. Other dams not listed here may also be posted for restricted access. For more information call the FWP Fishing Access Coordinator at 406-444-7885, or contact the Bureau of Reclamation(BOR) at 406-247-7296 or the Army Corp of Engineers (ACOE) 406-293-7751.

- Anita Dam (BOR, Yellowstone County)
- Fort Peck Dam (ACOE, Valley County)
- Fresno Dam (BOR, Hill County)
- *Tongue River Reservoir Dam (DNRC, Big Horn County)*

RATIONALE: Simply adds Tongue River Reservoir Dam to the list.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Prohibit bow fishing for gar in Eastern Fishing District. Q18

Page 76

Eastern District Standard Regulations

Methods of Taking Fish

Bow and Arrow

All waters open to angling are open to taking Paddlefish and non-game fish by bow and arrow unless otherwise noted in the exceptions to the standard regulations.

Fishing for Shortnose Gar with bow and arrow is not allowed.

Page 83

FORT PECK DREDGE CUTS (west of Park Grove Bridge and Nelson Dredge)

Bow and Arrow: open July 1 through August 31 for Paddlefish, 1 per season and in possession. An unused blue Paddlefish tag is required to fish for Paddlefish.

Combined Trout: 2 Rainbow Trout daily and in possession.

Hook and Line/Setlines 2 lines with 2 hooks per line on open water and 6 lines with 6 hooks per line through the ice.

Snagging: No snagging allowed.

Fishing for Shortnose Gar with bow and arrow is not allowed.

Page 84

MISSOURI RIVER

Entire River

Snagging: it is illegal to snag for fish other than Paddlefish on the Missouri River downstream from Fort Benton; any fish other than Paddlefish must be immediately released alive.

Fishing for Shortnose Gar with bow and arrow is not allowed.

Downstream from Fort Peck Dam

Paddlefish snagging: open for harvesting paddlefish from May 1 to June 15 from 6 AM to 9 PM. MST, daily unless closed earlier by FWP.

Catch-and-release snagging for Paddlefish is not peremitted.

Fishing for Shortnose Gar with bow and arrow is not allowed.

RATIONALE: The Shortnose Gar is a Montana Species of Concern. In recent years, using a bow and arrow to fish for this species appears to have increased in eastern Montana. Anglers using bow and arrow kill and waste Shortnose Gar. We propose to prohibit this activity to better protect this species of concern. Anglers would still be allowed to pursue shortnose gar using standard hook and line gear.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Adjustment to list: Live Bait - Lakes, Reservoirs, Ponds, and Impoundments (listed by County): Q19

Page 78

Lakes, Reservoirs, Ponds and Impoundments (listed by County):

Big Horn Co – Tongue River Reservoir (*see exceptions to standard regulations*)
Blaine Co – Cow Creek Reservoir, Dry Fork Reservoir, *Anita Reservoir, Reser Reservoir* and
all BLM reservoirs
Carter Co. – Doug Gardner #2 Reservoir, Talcott Pond
Custer Co. – Spotted Eagle Pond, Haughan Pond
Daniels Co. – Whitetail Reservoir
Dawson Co. – *Hollecker Pond*, Johnson Reservoir, Lindsey Reservoir
Fallon Co. – Baker Lake, South Sandstone Reservoir,
Fort Peck Reservoir
Garfield Co. – Whiteside Reservoir
Hill Co. – Beaver Creek Reservoir, Bailey Reservoir
McCone Co. – Flat Lake, Hedstrom Reservoir
~~Milk River impoundments downstream of Fresno Dam~~
Petroleum Co. – Petrolia Reservoir
Pairie Co. – Grants Reservoir, Homestead Reservoir
Phillips Co. – *Bison Bone Reservoir, Big McNeil Slough*, Cole Ponds, Ester Reservoir, Frenchman
Reservoir, Little Warm Reservoir, McChesney Reservoir, Nelson reservoir,
Wildhorse Reservoir and all BLM reservoirs
Richland Co. – Buxbaum West Reservoir, Gartside Reservoir, Kuester Reservoir
Roosevelt Co. – Bainville Railroad Ponds
Rosebud Co. – Castle Rock Lake, *Lee Pond*
Sheridan Co. – Box Elder Reservoir, Engstrom Reservoir, Medicine Lake Nat.Wildlife Refuge,
Raymond Reservoir
Valley Co. – Fort Peck Dredge Cut Trout Pond, Grub Reservoir, Gut Shot Reservoir, Shoot
Reservoir, Triple Crossing Reservoir, Valley Reservoir, VR2 Reservoir, Wards Res.,
and all BLM reservoirs in the Willow Creek Drainage
Wibaux Co. – Wibaux Pond
Yellowstone Co. – Anita Reservoir

RATIONALE: These changes help more clearly specify water bodies where live bait including live fish bait use is allowed. Over the years, release and establishment of undesirable baitfish has negatively affected several impoundments managed as trout fisheries. More clarity concerning where live bait may be used may help reduce the spread of undesirable baitfish into other waters managed for trout, or various panfish.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Re-word bait collection prohibition in Eurasian watermilfoil infested waters. Q20

Page 78

Bait Regulations

Bait restrictions in Eurasian watermilfoil contaminated areas

Eurasian watermilfoil is an aquatic invasive plant species that has become established in some Montana waters. This water weed is easily spread from one body of water to another primarily by plant fragments. Areas in the Eastern Fishing District that have been identified as contaminated with Eurasian watermilfoil are:

1. Fort Peck Reservoir
2. Fort Peck Dredge Cut Ponds
3. Missouri River from Fort Peck Dam to the mouth of the Milk River.

The additional bait restrictions within the contaminated areas are:

** Commercial collection of bait animals is not permitted.* ~~The collection of bait animals, including commercial seining is not permitted.~~

*Transport of live aquatic bait animals to and from these contaminated areas is allowed only in clean water (e.g., transport minnows and leeches in well water).

Anglers are asked to inspect all bait buckets and live wells to ensure that **NO PLANT FRAGMENTS** are present when leaving a body of water. It takes only a small fragment of Eurasian watermilfoil (less than 2 inches) to start a new plant and infest a body of water.

RATIONALE: This change helps avoid ambiguity, aids angler understanding and compliance.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Require mandatory Paddlefish harvest reporting. Unlawful to sell portions of Paddlefish. Q21

Page 79

General Paddlefish regulations for ALL areas

**Anglers harvesting a paddlefish anywhere in Montana (Yellowstone River, Missouri River or Ft Peck Dredge Cuts) are required to report harvested paddlefish within 48 hours of harvest.*

** Reporting options include: on-site where fish was harvested (in some instances fisheries staff will set up check points to assist with reporting), phone hotline or online (<http://fwp.mt.gov>).*

**Anglers reporting a harvested paddlefish will be required to provide the following information: Angler tag number, jaw tag number (if present), length (eye-fork), sex, date of harvest and harvest location. Additional information that may be collected on-site includes: weight and age structure (jaw section).*

**Instructions for reporting will be included when the paddlefish tag is sold.*

**Anglers not reporting a harvested paddlefish will not be eligible to purchase a paddlefish tag the following year.*

*All waters open to angling are open to snagging paddlefish during the open paddlefish season by anglers with a valid tag, except the Ft Peck Dredge Cuts Archery section.

*Snagging non-game fish is allowed on all open waters in the Eastern District except on the

*Missouri River downstream from Fort Benton to the North Dakota border and on the

*Yellowstone River downstream from the mouth of the Bighorn River.

*Each angler must cast for, hook and reel in his or her own paddlefish. It is unlawful for another person to do so. It is illegal to loan tags or use another angler's tag.

*Hook size is limited to 8/0 and smaller for all paddlefish snagging.

*Gaffs, no longer than 4.5 feet in length, may be used to land a paddlefish that will be tagged.

*Gaffs may not be used to land a paddlefish that will be released.

*Any tag locked shut prior to attachment to a paddlefish shall be void and is no replaceable. Any altered or modified tag shall be void. **Voided or lost tags are not replaceable.**

*Paddlefish must be tagged immediately upon harvest.

*It is unlawful to possess an untagged paddlefish or part of one. If anglers cut up a paddlefish, they must keep the part of the *fish* back and dorsal fin (back fin) where the tag is attached and sealed to the fish.

*Tags must remain with processed fish until consumption.

*When a paddlefish is captured and tagged, the fish must be removed from the river by the end of the day (9:00 PM, MST).

**It is unlawful for an individual to sell any portion of a paddlefish including eggs (processed or unprocessed) as prescribed by the F&W Commission.*

RATIONALE: Mandatory reporting will provide more precise Paddlefish harvest data, allowing better harvest season management (closure dates) and structure on an annual basis. Mandatory reporting will also enhance FWP's ability to better track the age of Paddlefish harvested. This information is essential to ensure sustainable management of the populations. The prohibition on selling portions of Paddlefish, including eggs, clarifies what is not allowed, aiding angler compliance.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Increase Lake Trout possession limit in Eastern Fishing District Standard regulations. Q22

Page 82

Lake Trout

3 daily and **6** in possession

RATIONALE: This change allows additional harvest of Lake Trout on Fort Peck Reservoir and conforms Lake Trout harvest limits to most sport fish limits in the Eastern Fishing District. Uniformity of regulations where possible aids angler understanding and compliance.

WESTERN DISTRICT –Region 1

Change from Western District Standard Regulation to no limit on Northern Pike harvest at Bull Lake (near Troy). Q24

New Exception

Bull Lake (near Troy)

Northern Pike: no limit.

RATIONALE: This regulation change is a response to the unauthorized placement of this species in Bull Lake, and the desire to see Northern Pike substantially controlled or eradicated at this location. The regulation allows anglers to participate in lake fishery conservation: Increasing or removing daily harvest limits is among many management actions identified in ARM 12.7.1503 to respond to unauthorized placement of fish; Allowing anglers to reduce unwanted fish numbers is among the relatively low cost ways to help meet desired management objectives while providing additional angling opportunity.

Northern Pike introductions often result in harm to other fish populations. Pike are top-level predators with the potential to reduce kokanee salmon and bull trout population abundance in Bull Lake. The existing salmon fishery makes Bull Lake a popular Region One fishing destination for both winter and summer use. Bull trout are listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Both facts motivate our management response.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Adjusting bass fishing season at Cabinet Gorge Reservoir to agree with Noxon Rapids Reservoir.
Q25

New Exception

CABINET GORGE RESERVOIR

Bass: 5 daily and in possession except from June 15 to July 15 only 1 daily and in possession, must be over 22-inches.

RATIONALE: Cabinet Gorge Reservoir and Noxon Rapids Reservoir are similar water bodies. Both are run-of-the-river dams with short water retention times. They are located near each other on the Clark Fork River. Because of these similarities the bass spawning and rearing conditions are similar. At this time, FWP has two different bass spawning closures on the two reservoirs.

One FWP study on Noxon Reservoir in the late 1990's found that longer closures better protected spawning bass which resulted in the current regulation on Noxon Rapids Reservoir, put in place in 2005. Bass spawning dates are largely dependent on water temperatures. Bass spawn when water temperatures reach about 60° F which is usually not until early July in both reservoirs. In late summer, Cabinet Gorge Reservoir actually runs a little cooler than Noxon Rapids Reservoir, but during spring they are similar. Due to the close proximity and similar stream flow characteristics of the two reservoirs, bass will be spawning at similar times in the two waters. Extending the angling closure from June 30 (Western District Standard regulation for bass) through July 15 should benefit bass in Cabinet Gorge Reservoir. Increasing regulation uniformity between the two reservoirs also adds clarity, assisting angler understanding and compliance.

New regulations: Libby Pond Q26

New Exception

LIBBY POND

Catch-and-release for trout, except anglers 14 years of age or younger who may take 1 trout daily and in possession.

RATIONALE: This is a newly created family fishing pond that requires regulations to provide opportunity for youth and family angling. The proposed regulation makes this pond consistent with other family fishing pond regulations in Region 1. Increasing regulation uniformity adds clarity, assisting angler understanding and compliance.

These ponds are heavily stocked to provide good catch rates. The catchable size fish are expensive to rear and limited in availability. A restrictive regulation allows limited harvest for youths and catch and release fishing for older family members. We encourage the opportunity for all family members to fish together, not limiting who can fish, but limiting who can harvest fish. This approach maximizes the angling opportunity for a limited resource, while allowing some harvest for the youngest anglers only.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Change regulations in one section of the Clark Fork River to agree with nearby sections. Q27

Page 30

CLARK FORK RIVER

The Region 1 portions

Mouth of Flathead River to mouth of Thompson River

Open entire year.

Catch-and-release for cutthroat trout.

~~Whitefish: open entire year with maggots or lures~~

~~Northern Pike: open entire year with bait or lures~~

Mouth of Thompson River to Idaho Border

Open entire year.

Combined Trout: 5 daily and 10 in possession, only 1 over 22 inches.

Cutthroat Trout: 3 daily and in possession, no size limit.

Hook and line: 2 lines with up to 2 hooks per line all year.

RATIONALE: These changes simplify regulations for this river reach. Currently, anglers can fish the entire year for some species but not all, which complicates enforcement. River reaches upstream and downstream of this reach are open the entire year for trout, pike and whitefish fishing. This river reach is similar to those upstream and downstream. All are part of the larger river system. The reach breaks are artificial delineation points that do not have a biological basis: there is no reason to maintain a fishing regulation distinction for these fish species. The proposed changes increase angler opportunity, and add regulation uniformity that will aid angler understanding and compliance.

Change Cutthroat Trout regulations in Flathead River sloughs to match the Flathead River. Q28

Page 33

FLATHEAD RIVER SLOUGHS

Brenneman, Church, Egan, Fennon, Half Moon, McWenneger, *Mill Creek*, and Rose Creek

Open entire year.

Combined Trout: 5 daily and in possession, no size limit.

Catch and Release for cutthroat trout ~~Cutthroat trout: 3 daily and in possession, no size limit~~

Hook and Line: 2 rods and/or lines with up to 2 hooks per line all year.

RATIONALE: At this time, Westslope Cutthroat Trout are managed as conservation and catch-and-release fisheries in the Flathead Lake and River system under the Montana Statewide Fisheries Management Plan. The sloughs mentioned here (including the addition of Mill Creek to the list) are connected to the Flathead River. Westslope Cutthroat Trout regularly move between these sloughs and the Flathead River. The sloughs do not contain separate cutthroat trout populations. Allowing harvest in the sloughs is in conflict with intentions for Flathead River management at this time. These changes correct that discrepancy.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Change Flathead River bass harvest regulations to agree with Flathead River Sloughs. Eliminate Lake Trout exception for the Flathead River. Q29

Page 33

FLATHEAD RIVER

Confluence of the North and Middle forks (near Blankenship Bridge) downstream to Flathead Lake

Extended season for Whitefish and Lake Trout, and catch-and-release for other game fish, except Northern Pike, from December 1 through the third Saturday in May with artificial lures and/or maggots only. From the mouth of the Stillwater River downstream to Flathead Lake, no maggots and no scented artificial lures (infused, saturated or applied).

Northern Pike: extended season for Northern Pike from December 1 through February 28, artificial lures only.

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Whitefish: 100 daily and in possession.

Combined Trout: 5 daily and in possession.

~~Lake trout: 15 daily and in possession—~~

Bass: 1 daily and in possession from third Saturday in May to June 30, must be over 22 inches. 5 daily and in possession from July 1 to the third Saturday in May, only 1 over 12 inches.

FLATHEAD RIVER SLOUGHS

Brenneman, Church, Egan, Fennon, Half Moon, McWenegar, *Mill*, and Rose Creek

Bass: 1 daily and in possession from third Saturday in May to June 30, must be over 22 inches. 5 daily and in possession from July 1 to the third Saturday in May, only 1 over 12 inches.

Church and Fennon

~~Bass: 1 daily and in possession from third Saturday in May to July 1, must be over 22 inches. 5 daily and in possession from July 1 to the third Saturday in May, only 1 over 12 inches.~~

RATIONALE: Bass anglers commonly boat from the Flathead River into Church and Fennon Sloughs, where the majority of bass are found. Under current regulations, an angler harvesting more than one bass over 12 inches long in the river (allowed except from the third Saturday in May through June 30) will be in violation of the daily bass limit upon entering either slough (where keeping more than one bass over 12 inches long is never allowed). This angler could be cited. By changing the river regulation to agree with the current regulations in Church and Fennon sloughs, we avoid placing anglers inadvertently in violation of bass harvest regulations. By applying the same regulation to other Flathead River sloughs (Egan, Half Moon, McWenegar, Mill, and Rose Creek), we also eliminate the need for a separate Church and Fennon Slough exception. Agreement will provide more protection for bass: Larger fish especially are susceptible to angling overharvest because bass occur in relatively low numbers and grow slowly in this system due to cold water and low biological productivity. Increasing regulation uniformity also adds clarity, assisting angler understanding and compliance.

If the Western Fishing District Lake Trout limit is increased as proposed elsewhere to 20 daily and 40 in possession, this less liberal Flathead River exception is no longer needed.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Eliminate the existing daily and possession limit for Lake Trout in Flathead River, to be replaced by more liberal Western Fishing District limits. Q30

Page 33

FLATHEAD RIVER

Confluence of the North and Middle forks (near Blankenship Bridge) downstream to Flathead Lake

Extended season for Whitefish and Lake Trout, and catch-and-release for other game fish, except Northern Pike, from December 1 through the third Saturday in May with artificial lures and/or maggots only. From the mouth of the Stillwater River downstream to Flathead Lake, no maggots and no scented artificial lures (infused, saturated or applied).

Northern Pike: extended season for Northern Pike from December 1 through February 28, artificial lures only.

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Whitefish: 100 daily and in possession.

Combined Trout: 5 daily and in possession.

~~Lake trout: 15 daily and in possession.~~

RATIONALE: If the Western Fishing District Lake Trout limit is increased as proposed elsewhere to 20 daily and 40 in possession, this less liberal Flathead River exception is no longer needed.

Establish a length limit on Yellow Perch in Flathead Lake. Q31

Page 33

FLATHEAD LAKE

Flathead Lake north of Flathead Indian Reservation boundary

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Lake Whitefish: 100 daily and in possession.

Lake Trout: 100 daily and in possession, only 1 over 36 inches, and all fish 30 to 36 inches must be released.

Yellow Perch: No limit, only 10 daily over 10 inches. No possession limit.

NOTE: Flathead Indian Reservation Tribal Permit is required to fish on the southern portion of the lake. Check Tribal Fishing regulations for the south portion of *the* lake.

RATIONALE: The Yellow Perch fishery on Flathead Lake is very popular among anglers and receives substantial fishing pressure annually. This is primarily a harvest fishery during the spring spawning period. The public has expressed concern that larger perch (greater than 10 inches) are declining and reproduction is consequently reduced. Large perch are particularly vulnerable to angling during the spring spawning season. This regulation would ease angler exploitation of the larger fish, helping to preserve their reproductive contributions.

Management of Flathead Lake fisheries is shared between the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks with FWP managing the north half of lake. The co-managers together developed and are proposing this regulation for both halves of the lake.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Establish a length limit on Yellow Perch and increase harvest limits for Northern Pike in Smith Lake. Q32

New Exception

SMITH LAKE (near Kalispell)

Yellow Perch: No limit, only 10 daily over 10 inches. No possession limit.

Northern Pike: 50 daily and 100 in possession

RATIONALE: Since 1997, an expansion of Northern Pike in Smith Lake has reduced Yellow Perch abundance. Small pike especially are now overly abundant and eat many perch. Anglers now target larger perch and small pike. FWP fisheries management direction for the lake is to provide recreational opportunity and to increase the quality of fishery, where feasible and appropriate. Both objectives could be achieved at Smith Lake with a decrease in pike abundance and an increase in perch size. The proposed regulations aim to achieve these objectives. Increasing harvest opportunity for pike from the Western Fishing District standard 15 daily to 50 daily will allow anglers to harvest more small pike, possibly helping to reduce their abundance. Establishing a size limit and protecting more of the larger perch should improve spawner numbers and their subsequent reproductive production.

Establish a length limit on Yellow Perch in Lower Stillwater Lake. Q33

Page 37

LOWER STILLWATER LAKE

Spearing: Open for Northern Pike through the ice only.

Yellow Perch: No limit, only 10 daily over 10 inches. No possession limit.

RATIONALE: Yellow Perch fisheries are increasingly popular among anglers. The public has expressed concern that larger perch (greater than 10 inches) in many areas are declining and reproduction is consequently reduced. Large perch are particularly vulnerable to angling during the spring spawning season. This regulation would ease angler exploitation of the larger fish in Lower Stillwater Lake, helping to preserve their reproductive contributions.

Delete an unnecessary regulation exception for Frank Lake. Q34

Page 33

FRANK LAKE

~~Northwest ¼ of the lake, as posted~~

~~Catch and release for rainbow trout from March 15 to May 1.~~

RATIONALE: Frank Lake has no natural reproduction. Rainbow Trout are stocked in this lake to provide a put, grow, and take fishery. Many of the Rainbow Trout in the Northwest ¼ of the lake are post spawn fish that will likely not survive the act of spawning. Eliminating this exception provides an appropriate angler harvest opportunity by eliminating catch-and-release requirements and reverting to Western Fishing District Standard harvest regulations.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Increasing protections for adult Bull Trout in key spawning streams tributary to the Kootenai River.

Page 35 Q35

KOOTENAI RIVER

Highway 37 Bridge, near Fisher River, to Idaho Border.

Closed to angling June 1 through September 30 within 150-yards upstream and downstream of the Quartz Creek stream mouth unless posted at a greater distance.

Closed to angling June 1 through September 30 within 150-yards upstream and downstream of the O'Brien Creek stream mouth unless posted at a greater distance.

RATIONALE: Bull Trout seasonally spend time at the mouths of spawning streams waiting for flows and water temperatures in the spawning streams to reach optimum immigration conditions. This congregation often attracts anglers. At these times, Bull Trout are vulnerable to angling and can suffer mortality even if released. Angling closures in key areas used by staging Bull Trout prevent anglers from targeting vulnerable fish, and avoid incidental hooking as well.

Add catch-and release for Burbot to portions of the Kootenai River; Delete Lake Koocanusa exception. Q36

Page 35

KOOTENAI RIVER

Highway 37 bridge, near Fisher River, to Idaho Border

Open entire year.

Combined Trout: 4 daily and in possession, includes 3 under 13 inches and only 1 over 18 inches.

Catch-and-release for Burbot.

PAGE 36

LAKE KOOCANUSA

~~Closed to burbot (ling) fishing January 15 to March 1.~~

Salmon: 50 daily and 100 in possession.

Rainbow Trout: Adipose clipped fish less than 22 inches must be released (see location of adipose fin on the Rainbow Trout color plate at the front of this booklet).

Bull Trout: CONTINUES-

NOTE: Bull Trout regulation changes are discussed elsewhere ...)

RATIONALE: Burbot populations in the Western Fishing District are generally lower in abundance now compared to historic levels. Reduced harvest will potentially increase spawner numbers. Adding a catch and release regulation on the Kootenai River between the Highway 37 bridge (near the Fisher River confluence) downstream to Idaho border provides additional protections, and supports recent burbot re-introduction efforts by the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and Idaho Fish and Game. Our goal is to further protect these populations now, so that a strong spawning population may again provide improved harvest opportunities.

Reducing the Western District standard harvest limit eliminates the need for the timing closure exception on Lake Koocanusa.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~striketrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Change from Western District Standard Regulation to no limit on Brown Trout harvest in the Kootenai River from Highway 37 Bridge downstream to the Idaho border. Q37

Page 35

KOOTENAI RIVER

Highway 37 bridge, near Fisher River, to Idaho Border

Open entire year.

Combined Trout: 4 daily and in possession, includes 3 under 13 inches and only 1 over 18 inches.

Brown trout: no limit.

RATIONALE: This regulation change is a response to the unauthorized placement of this species in the Kootenai River drainage and the desire to see Brown Trout substantially controlled or eradicated at this location in Montana. The regulation allows anglers to participate in stream fishery conservation: Increasing or removing daily harvest limits is among many management actions identified in ARM 12.7.1503 to respond to unauthorized placement of fish; Allowing anglers to reduce unwanted fish numbers is a relatively low cost way to help meet desired management objectives while providing additional angling opportunity.

Brown Trout were first identified in Lake Creek, a tributary to Kootenai River in 1995. Abundance of brown trout has increased ever since.

Change from Western District Standard Regulation to no limit on Brown Trout harvest Lake Creek (near Troy). Q38

Page 35

LAKE CREEK (near Troy)

Entire Stream

Open to fishing all year.

Snagging: open for salmon from September 15 through November 30.

150 yards downstream of Keeler Creek to mouth

Brown trout: no limit.

RATIONALE: This regulation change is a response to the unauthorized placement of species in the Kootenai River drainage and the desire to see Brown Trout substantially controlled or eradicated at this location in Montana. The regulation allows anglers to participate in stream fishery conservation: Increasing or removing daily harvest limits is among many management actions identified in ARM 12.7.1503 to respond to unauthorized placement of fish; Extending the fishing season can also help reduce unwanted fish numbers. Both actions are among the relatively low cost ways to help meet desired management objectives while providing additional angling opportunities.

Brown Trout were first identified in Lake Creek in 1995. Abundance of brown trout has increased since then, but survey information indicates they remain below Keeler Creek. Keeler Creek is the only spawning tributary for the relatively isolated Bull Trout population present in Lake Creek as well. Preventing competition with Brown Trout is a Bull Trout conservation priority.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Expanding protection for Bull Trout at the mouth of Lion Creek. Q39

PAGE 36

LION CREEK (tributary to Swan River)

Closed entire year.

Mouth of Lion Creek

Closed to angling June 1 through September 30 within a **300-yard** ~~150-yard~~ radius of the stream mouth, unless posted at a greater distance.

RATIONALE: Bull trout are listed as “Threatened” under the Endangered Species Act. Current regulations prohibit angling for Bull Trout in streams. In addition, Lion Creek includes a complete angling closure at its mouth to protect Bull Trout that stage in this area before ascending the stream to spawn. Anglers fish the Swan River and appear to be targeting fish at the confluence of Lion Creek. Based on observations of anglers both fishing and catching Bull Trout at this location, the current closure area appears too small to adequately protect Bull Trout when they congregate at this location. Increasing the size of the area closed to angling should benefit Bull Trout conservation objectives.

Eliminate the existing Loon Lake regulation exception and revert to Western District standard limits. Q40

Page 36

LOON LAKE (NEAR Ferndale)

~~Combined trout: 4 less than 12 inches and only 1 over 22 inches daily and in possession.~~

RATIONALE: This is a put-and-take rainbow trout fishery that depends on FWP stocking. The current slot limit regulation for Loon Lake was an attempt to promote a trophy rainbow trout fishery. This trophy fishery has not developed. Current user demographics, enforcement difficulties, and confounded fish species composition, including an unauthorized placement of Black Crappie, highlight the ineffectiveness of continuing the slot-limit experiment. For all of these reasons, FWP now proposes to remove the slot limit restriction and default instead to the Western Fishing District standard fishing regulations. This change will simplify regulations, increase angler harvest opportunity, and benefit enforcement.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Standardize stream angling closures in Bull Trout streams in the Kootenai River drainage. Q41

Page 29

~~BLUE SKY CREEK~~

~~Closed entire year.~~

~~CLARENCE CREEK (near Eureka)~~

~~Closed entire year.~~

Page 34

GRAVE CREEK *AND TRIBUTARIES* (near Eureka *including Clarence and Blue Sky Creeks*)

~~Snagging: open for salmon from Highway 93 bridge downstream to mouth September 15 through November 30. Standard limits apply.~~

Downstream of Highway 93 bridge to mouth

Snagging: open for salmon from September 15 through November 30, 20 salmon daily and 40 in possession.

Upstream of Highway 93 bridge

Open third Saturday in May through August 15.

Page 35

KEELER CREEK *AND TRIBUTARIES*

Open third Saturday in May through *August 15* ~~July 15~~.

New Exception

QUARTZ CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES (Kootenai River drainage including West Fork)

Open third Saturday in May through August 15.

Page 44

~~WEST FORK QUARTZ CREEK (Kootenai River drainage)~~

~~Open third Saturday in May through July 15.~~

RATIONALE: These regulations standardize stream angling closures in bull trout streams in the Kootenai River drainage. They provide further protection to bull trout in Grave and Quartz Creeks, and in the North and South Forks of Keeler Creek, which would now open and close to fishing according to the standard Western District season regulation. Standardization opens Clarence and Blue Sky Creeks to angling, and extends the season in the West Fork of Quartz an additional month. These creeks are higher in the drainage. Typically adult bull trout are not present at these locations until after the August 15 fishing season closure. Their opening provides some new angling opportunity.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Allow Bull Trout harvest again in Lake Koocanusa. Q42

Page 36

LAKE KOOCANUSA

Closed to Burbot (ling) fishing January 15 to March 1.

Salmon: 50 daily and 100 in possession.

Rainbow Trout: Adipose clipped fish less than 22 inches must be released (see location of adipose fin on the Rainbow Trout color plate at the front of this booklet).

Bull trout: *1 fish per license year from June 1 through February 28, Catch-and-release the rest of the year.* ~~Catch-and-release only.~~ A Lake Koocanusa Bull Trout Catch Card must be in possession when fishing for bull trout. See Special Licenses requirements for application information. All bull trout must be released immediately. It is unlawful to possess a live bull trout for any reason.

RATIONALE: The Statewide Fisheries Management Plan 2013-2018 identifies management direction for Bull Trout that includes reinstating limited harvest in Lake Koocanusa if it is compatible with conservation objectives for the species. A Bull Trout harvest fishery was open previously on Lake Koocanusa between 2004 and 2011, but was stopped in Montana when redd counts in important spawning tributaries declined over time, raising concerns about angling effects on existing population status. Management actions by British Columbia, Canada, to restrict their relatively liberal Bull Trout harvest allowance, and by Montana which completely eliminated harvest in recent years, are now strongly correlated with increasing redd numbers in critical redd count surveys, including those in the Wigwam River system of Canada. Collective monitoring supports that harvest would again be permissible without harmful population effects. Although warranted, we nonetheless choose a cautious approach to reinstating harvest. By starting with a harvest of one Bull Trout per license year, FWP can assess the effects of this level of harvest while considering reinstating a 2-fish per year limit as was formerly in place on Lake Koocanusa. A 2- fish per year limit is also currently in place on Hungry Horse Reservoir.

The Bull Trout is listed as a Threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The USFWS supports re-opening the harvest fishery and will permit this proposed regulation change if adopted.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Remove an unneeded seasonal angling closure from Lake Mary Ronan. Q43

Page 36

LAKE MARY RONAN

~~Open March 1 to third Saturday in May: Yellow perch and northern pike only.~~

~~Open third Saturday in May through the end of February~~

Salmon: 10 daily and 20 in possession.

Bass: open third Saturday in May through June 30: only 1 over 22 inches. Open July 1 through the end of February: 5 daily and in possession, only 1 over 12 inches. ~~Closed~~

~~March 1 to the third Saturday in May~~

Northern Pike: no limit.

Spearing: open for Northern Pike.

RATIONALE: Lake Mary Ronan is currently closed to fishing for all species except perch and pike from March 1 to the third Saturday in May. Until recent years the closure included perch and pike. The closure is many decades old and supposedly was put in place on many lakes in the area as a concern over safe ice conditions. The closure is no longer in place on any other lake. Fishing regulations are currently not being used to protect anglers from lake conditions. The closure reduces angling opportunity for two and a half months. Removing the closures will allow anglers to fish for salmon, trout and bass throughout the year as is currently allowed elsewhere in Region 1. Removing the closures would also standardize the fishing season on Lake Mary Ronan with other lakes in the Region and across the state. Increasing regulation uniformity adds clarity, assisting angler understanding and compliance.

WESTERN DISTRICT – Region 2

New regulations, Skyline Pond in Butte. Q45

New Exception

SKYLINE POND (BUTTE)

1 trout daily and in possession.

Open to fishing for anglers 14 years of age and younger.

One rod per child.

RATIONALE: This is a new pond needing new regulations. Fishing opportunities for young anglers are somewhat limited in the Butte area. Skyline Pond was built specifically to help remedy this situation. These regulations ensure that the new pond is reserved for young anglers.

Ponds like Skyline are heavily stocked to provide good catch rates. The catchable size fish are expensive to rear and limited in availability. A low harvest limit still allows some harvest opportunity for young anglers, while retaining and maximizing the opportunities for all young anglers to fish this limited resource.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Remove Northern Pike from the extended season list for the Blackfoot River Mainstem.
Standardize trout harvest length exception within Region 2. Q46

Page 29

BLACKFOOT RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES

Mainstem and all tributaries except the Clearwater River

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 rainbow trout over 14 inches long*, ~~no Rainbow Trout over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout. (See Clearwater River Drainage for exceptions).

Artificial lures only within 100-yard radius of the mouths of Belmont Creek, Copper Creek, Gold Creek, Monture Creek and North Fork Blackfoot River.

Mainstem only

Extended season for ~~northern pike and~~ whitefish and catch-and-release for trout open December 1 to third Saturday in May with artificial lures and/or maggots only.

Tributaries are closed to fishing.

Mainstem from Landers Fork mouth downstream to the confluence with the Clark Fork River

Catch-and-release for Brook Trout. (This regulation is a result of Bull Trout being misidentified and harvested as Brook Trout. Brook Trout are rare in this section of river whereas Bull Trout are common).

RATIONALE: The Combined Trout modification helps standardize the various and different length limits currently applied to Combined Trout quotas in different areas to just one length (14 inches) in rivers and streams.

Northern Pike are rarely found in the Blackfoot River since the removal of Milltown Dam. An extended season open for Northern Pike harvest may inappropriately misrepresent to anglers that they are still available to be caught.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Increase Kokanee snagging opportunity between Lakes Alva and Inez. Remove catch-and-release restriction for Bass in Clearwater River, from Salmon Lake outlet to river mouth. Standardize Combined Trout limit. Q47

Page 30

CLEARWATER RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES (lakes not included, see exceptions for individual lakes elsewhere)

Clearwater River upstream from the Salmon Lake inlet and all tributaries of the Clearwater River except the West Fork and Marshall Creek

Closed to fishing from Rainy Lake fish barrier downstream for 100 yards.

Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.

Northern Pike: no limit, open to spearing.

Snagging: open for *Kokanee* Salmon from *Lake Alva outlet to Lake Inez inlet and from Lake Inez outlet to Seeley Lake inlet* from September 15 through November 30. Closed to Snagging from Seeley Lake outlet to Salmon Lake inlet.

NOTE: Clearwater River sections between lakes are closed to fishing from Dec. 1 until the third Saturday in May. This includes the Clearwater River section from the outlet of Seeley Lake at Riverview Drive Bridge ("Dogtown") downstream to inlet of Salmon Lake.

Clearwater River from Salmon Lake outlet to mouth *of the Clearwater River*, including Blanchard Lake and Elbow Lake.

Open entire year.

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

~~Catch and release for Bass.~~

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 rainbow trout over 14 inches.* ~~no rainbow over 12 inches.~~

Northern Pike: no limit, open to spearing.

RATIONALE: Kokanee salmon are very abundant and show slow growth rates in many waters in this area. Increasing angler harvest opportunity between Lakes Alva and Inez in consort with regulation proposals elsewhere may help to reduce kokanee numbers and to improve their growth rates. Bass limit would revert to Western Fishing District standard "5 daily and in possession, no size limit. Third Saturday in May through June 30: 1 daily and in possession, must be over 22 inches." The Combined Trout length limit change helps standardize inconsequentially subtle length limit differences for some trout species currently used in various Combined Trout quotas, to one length (14 inches) in rivers and streams.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Standardize Combined Trout limit exception for the Clark Fork River with others in Region 2. Q48

Page 30

CLARK FORK RIVER

The Region 2 portions

Upstream from Perkins Lane Bridge, near Warm Springs

- Open entire year.
- Catch and release only.
- Artificial lures only.
- Closed to fishing from boats/vessels.

Perkins Lane Bridge, near Warm Springs, to mouth of Flathead River

- Closed to fishing from about 2 ½ miles upstream from the confluence of the Blackfoot River to about ½ mile downstream, as posted.
- Extended season for Northern Pike and Whitefish and catch-and-release for trout open December 1 to third Saturday in May with artificial lures and/or maggots only.
- Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.
- Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 over 14 inches long*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~.
- Northern Pike: no limit.
- Artificial lures only within 100-yard radius of the mouths of Rattlesnake Creek, Petty Creek, Fish Creek, Cedar Creek, Dry Creek, Trout Creek, and St. Regis River.

RATIONALE: The Combined Trout length limit change helps standardize different length limits used for some trout species in various Combined Trout quotas in Region 2, to one length (14 inches) in rivers and streams. Uniformity aids angler understanding and compliance.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Standardize many trout harvest exceptions throughout Region 2. Q49

Page 25

ALICE CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 rainbow trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout.

BEAVER CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 rainbow trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout.

BELMONT CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 rainbow trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout.

Page 29

CHAMBERLAIN CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 rainbow trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout.

Page 31

COPPER CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 rainbow trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout.

Artificial lures only, including within a 100-yard radius of the mouth.

COTTONWOOD CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 rainbow trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout.

Page 32

DUNHAM CREEK (tributary to Monture Creek, Blackfoot drainage)

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 rainbow trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout.

Artificial lures only.

Page 34

GOLD CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 rainbow trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout.

Artificial lures only, including within a 100-yard radius of the mouth.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Page 36

LANDERS FORK (tributary to Blackfoot River)

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 rainbow trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout.

Page 37

MONTURE CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 rainbow trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout.

Artificial lures only, including within a 100-yard radius of the mouth.

Page 38

NEVADA CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 rainbow trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout.

Page 32

FISH CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES (Clark Fork River drainage)

Entire Drainage

Artificial lures only, including within a 100-yard radius of the mouth.

Mainstem downstream of the confluence of the South and West forks

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches, any size Brown Trout*. ~~3 rainbow or brown trout in any combination daily and in possession, none over 15 inches.~~

Page 38

PETTY CREEK (Tributary to the Clark Fork River)

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches, any size Brown Trout*. ~~none over 15 inches.~~

Artificial lures only within 100-yard radius of the mouth.

Page 39

RATTLESNAKE CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES (near Missoula)

Entire River

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches, any size Brown Trout*. ~~none over 15 inches.~~

Artificial lures only, including within 100-yard radius of the mouth.

Downstream from the mouth of Beeskove Creek

Closed to fishing from the mouth of Beeskove Creek to 100 yards downstream of Mountain Water Company Dam.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Page 40

ST. REGIS RIVER

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches, any size Brown Trout.* ~~none over 15 inches~~

Artificial lures only within 100-yard radius of the mouth.

RATIONALE: This proposal helps standardize inconsequentially subtle length limit differences for some trout species currently used in various Combined Trout quotas in Region 2 to one length (14 inches) in rivers and streams. It also helps reduce the number of exceptions used to a choice of either any size fish, catch-and-release, or 3 Combined Trout, only 1 fish over 14 inches long.

The biological effect of size limits that differ by 3 inches at the most for these sport fish is negligible. Use of a middle value (14 inches) in the range of existing regulations currently used further limits the potential effect on populations. Based on creel information and other angler reports, actual harvest of trout is relatively rare (much less than 10% on average) in most rivers and streams in Region 2. In these situations, harvest is simply not expected to meaningfully affect trout population abundance or size structure, while standardization can greatly aid angler understanding and compliance.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Reduce harvest limit and set a length requirement to harvest Brook Trout from Georgetown Lake.
Q50

Page 34

GEORGETOWN LAKE

Open third Saturday in May through March 31, except for the South and East shoreline area which is only open July 1 through March 31. South and East shoreline area described as follows: all waters from the shore or within 100 yards of shore in the area extending from a point 200 yards west of Denton's Point Marina (along the shore, including all of Stuart Mill Bay) to a point 200 yards north from the mouth of North Fork Flint Creek.

Salmon: no daily or possession limit.

Combined Trout, includes brook trout: 5 daily and in possession, of which *only 1* ~~no more than 2~~ may be *a* brook trout. *Only brook trout over 18 inches can be kept.*

RATIONALE: Current FWP sampling information including angler reports indicate that Brook Trout in Georgetown Lake are possibly being overharvested under current regulations. We especially see a reduction in the number of larger fish, 16 inches or longer. With the proposed regulation changes, fewer small fish should be harvested, allowing larger numbers to recruit into the 18 inch and longer size classes. In this manner we hope to increase the number of trophy fish of that size available to anglers.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Increase kokanee harvest limits at Lakes Alva, Inez, Placid, Salmon, and Seeley. Remove catch-and-release restriction for Bass at Lakes Alva, Inez, and Salmon. Q51

Page 35

LAKE ALVA

~~Catch-and-release for bass.~~

Northern Pike: no limit.

Kokanee Salmon: **10 daily and 20 in possession** ~~5 daily and 10 in possession~~

Spearing: open for Northern Pike.

LAKE INEZ

~~Catch-and-release for bass.~~

Northern Pike: no limit.

Kokanee Salmon: **10 daily and 20 in possession** ~~5 daily and 10 in possession~~

Spearing: open for Northern Pike.

Page 39

PLACID LAKE (includes outlet arm to outlet control structure)

Catch-and-release for bass.

Northern Pike: no limit.

Kokanee Salmon: **10 daily and 20 in possession** ~~5 daily and 10 in possession~~

Spearing: open for Northern Pike.

Snagging: open for Salmon October 15 through December 31, 20 Salmon daily and 40 in possession.

SALMON LAKE AND TRIBUTARIES

~~Catch-and-release for bass.~~

Northern Pike: no limit.

Kokanee Salmon: **10 daily and 20 in possession** ~~5 daily and 10 in possession~~

Spearing: open for Northern Pike.

SEELEY LAKE

Bass: no daily or possession limit for entire year.

Northern Pike: no limit.

Kokanee Salmon: **10 daily and 20 in possession** ~~5 daily and 10 in possession~~

Spearing: open for Northern Pike.

Snagging: open for Salmon October 15 through December 31, 20 Salmon daily and 40 in possession.

RATIONALE: Kokanee salmon are abundant and show slow growth rates in these waters. Increasing harvest may help to reduce Kokanee numbers and to improve growth rates. Bass limit would revert to the Western Fishing District standard: "5 daily and in possession, no size limit. Third Saturday in May through June 30: 1 daily and in possession, must be over 22 inches."

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Add artificial lures only restriction to Silver Bow Creek and its tributaries. Q52

Page 40

SILVER BOW CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES

Mainstem and Tributaries

Catch-and-release for cutthroat trout

Artificial lures only.

RATIONALE: Silver Bow Creek's fishery is in the recovery stage and we hope that Cutthroat Trout in particular can continue to increase in number and distribution. Cutthroat Trout are already protected by catch-and-release angling regulations in Silver Bow Creek. This proposal provides additional protections by eliminating bait and the potential harm associated with its use. Artificial lures still allow angling and harvest opportunities for Brook Trout in this system.

CENTRAL DISTRICT – Region 3

Madison River regulation modifications. Q54

Page 62

MADISON RIVER

From Hebgen Dam to Ennis Reservoir

Artificial lures only.

Combined Trout: 1 Daily and in possession, any size.

Quake Lake outlet to Lyons Bridge

Closed to fishing from boats/vessels

Ennis Bridge to Ennis Lake

Closed to fishing from boats/vessels

RATIONALE: This regulation change greatly simplifies the Madison River fishing regulations.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~striketrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Delete Darlington Spring Creek and Poindexter Slough exceptions; revert to Central Fishing District standard regulations instead. Q55

Page 58

~~DARLINGTON SPRING CREEK aka Darlington Ditch (near Three Forks)~~

~~On Cobblestone FAS~~

~~Open Entire Year—~~

~~Catch and release for trout.~~

~~Artificial Lures Only~~

~~Outside of Cobblestone FAS boundaries~~

~~Open Entire Year.~~

~~Standard limits apply.—~~

Page 67

~~POINDEXTER SLOUGH~~

~~Open entire year—~~

~~Catch and release: December 1 to third Saturday in May with artificial lures only.~~

RATIONALE: These changes eliminate unnecessary regulation exceptions for these streams, and default instead to the Central Fishing District standard regulation.

Delete five mountain lake exceptions; revert to Central Fishing District standard regulations instead. Q56

Page 59

~~FERGUSON LAKE (Big Hole River drainage)~~

~~Combined trout: 5 daily and in possession.~~

~~FOOLHEN LAKE (Big Hole River drainage)~~

~~Combined trout: 5 daily and in possession.~~

Page 67

~~SCOTT LAKE (Beaverhead River drainage)~~

~~Combined trout: 5 daily and in possession.~~

Page 70

~~TAHEPIA LAKE (Wise River drainage)~~

~~Combined trout: 5 daily and in possession.~~

Page 71

~~WAUKENA LAKE (Big Hole River drainage)~~

~~Combined trout: 5 daily and in possession.~~

RATIONALE: These changes eliminate unnecessary regulation exceptions for these mountain lakes, and default instead to the Central Fishing District standard regulation. "Lakes/Reservoirs: 5 daily and 10 in possession includes cutthroat trout."

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Allow Cutthroat Trout harvest in Hyalite Creek section Below Hyalite Reservoir. Q57

Page 60

HYALITE CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES

Above Hyalite Reservoir including East Fork Hyalite and West Fork Hyalite Creek

Open July 15 through November 30.

Combined Trout: *Limit may all be includes* Cutthroat Trout.

Below Hyalite Reservoir

Open third Saturday in May through November 30.

Catch and release for cutthroat trout

Combined Trout: limit may all be Cutthroat Trout.

RATIONALE: This regulation change provides a simple way to help remove Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout otherwise lost when stranded downstream of Hyalite Dam. Hatchery and wild Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout annually wash over the reservoir to occupy parts of the creek below. Some of these Cutthroat Trout are trapped in the section of stream between the spillway on Hyalite Reservoir and the spillway channel where it connects back to Hyalite Creek. These fish cannot be legally harvested under the current regulation. Stranded fish die. Among other problems they then become an odorous attractant to bears. The regulation change would allow a new angler harvest opportunity and help to more cost effectively resolve this problem.

Allow some Rainbow Trout harvest in the Jefferson River. Q58

Page 61

JEFFERSON RIVER

Entire River

Open entire year.

Northern pike: no limit.

Combined Trout: 3 Daily and in possession, 1 may be a rainbow trout, only 1 fish can be over 18 inches long.

~~Confluence of Beaverhead and Big Hole rivers to Williams Bridge FAS~~

~~Catch and release for cutthroat trout~~

~~Combined Trout: 3 brown trout daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches.~~

~~Williams Bridge FAS to confluence with Missouri River~~

~~Catch and release for cutthroat trout~~

~~Combined Trout: 5 brown trout daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches.~~

Seasonal spawning closure at tributary mouths: Hell Canyon Creek and Willow Springs Creek.

Closed to fishing 100 yards upstream and downstream from the creek mouths from April 1 through April 30 and from October 15 through November 30.

RATIONALE: This regulation change provides a new opportunity to harvest Rainbow Trout after the population has recovered significantly in the Jefferson River. It also simplifies the fishing regulations for the entire river by standardizing the number of trout allowed in combined trout daily and possession limits.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

CENTRAL DISTRICT – Region 4

New regulations: East Fork Reservoir spearing opportunity. Q60

New Exception

EAST FORK RESERVOIR (near Lewistown)

Spearing: open for non-game fish and Northern Pike through the ice and by persons swimming or submerged.

Hook and line/setlines: 6 lines with 2 hooks per line through the ice.

RATIONALE: East Fork Reservoir has a population of northern pike. The public has expressed interest in spearing pike through the ice. Allowing spearing through the ice and by swimmers would provide opportunity for this type of angling. Allowing 6 lines through the ice would allow more opportunity for ice fishing for pike using a method accepted for this species in other parts of the state.

New regulations: Willow Creek Reservoir near Augusta. Q61

New Exception

WILLOW CREEK RESERVOIR (near Augusta)

5 trout daily only one over 20 inches

RATIONALE: Limiting harvest of larger trout is intended to help maintain or improve the abundance of larger-size trout in the reservoir. FWP is now managing Willow Creek Reservoir with emphasis on shifting size structure of the trout population towards larger (longer) fish. In 2014 FWP completed an Environmental Assessment to stock Tiger Muskie (a sterile Northern Pike x Muskellunge hybrid) intending they will eat suckers, reduce their number, and thereby reduce sucker competition with trout. The trout length restriction is simply an additional management action to help maintain more larger trout in the fishery.

Remove Sunrise-Sunset shelter removal requirement on Hauser Reservoir and Lake Helena. Q62

Page 47

Methods of Taking Fish

~~**Sunrise-Sunset Removal:** Shelters may not be placed on the ice prior to sunrise and must be removed before sunset each day on Hauser Reservoir and Lake Helena.~~

RATIONALE: This regulation was an artifact of high fishing pressure associated with the kokanee fishery of the 1990's. Kokanee are no longer abundant in Hauser Reservoir and Lake Helena. High kokanee harvest is no longer an issue, so this special regulation is not needed to aid enforcement.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Eliminate Bean Lake regulation exception. Q63

Page 52

BEAN LAKE

~~Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches.~~

RATIONALE: Lake water levels at Bean Lake are very low and have been for many years. FWP stopped stocking the lake in 2005. Maintaining a special regulation implies that we still actively manage the lake as a fishery. Removing the exception helps avoid this potential misunderstanding. If the exception is eliminated, angling regulations at Bean Lake would revert to Central Fishing District standards.

Modify Big Spring Creek exception to catch and release only for trout. Q64

Page 55

BIG SPRING CREEK (near Lewistown)

~~Entire Creek~~

~~Open entire year~~

Upstream of the US Highway 191 bridge, including East Fork Big Spring Creek downstream from the Reservoir

Catch and release only for all *trout* fish species

RATIONALE: A catch-and-release angling regulation for all fish in portions of Big Spring Creek was instituted in 2003 due to concerns about PCB contamination of fish and the potential threat to human health. Recent PCB abatement efforts show a 95% reduction in PCB detection in Big Spring Creek. The 2014 fish tissue samples showed PCB levels were low and do not warrant “do not eat” restrictions. As such there is no need to preclude harvest of non-trout species from Big Spring Creek on the basis of human health risk.

Despite successful clean-up, public sentiment favors maintaining catch- and-release angling for trout, a regulation we propose to maintain. Northern Pike, Yellow Perch and Mountain Whitefish occur in low abundance locally in this drainage, and are most likely the species of fish that would be harvested with this regulation change.

If the Central Fishing District standard regulation that streams and rivers are open all year is adopted, the current exception for Big Spring Creek (near Lewistown) can be eliminated.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Modify East Fork Big Spring Creek exception to catch and release only for trout. Q65

Page 55

EAST FORK BIG SPRING CREEK (near Lewistown)

Downstream from the Reservoir

Catch and release only for all *trout* fish-species

RATIONALE: A catch-and- release angling regulation for East Fork Big Spring Creek was instituted in 2003 due to concerns about PCB contamination of fish and the potential threat to human health. Recent PCB abatement efforts show a 95% reduction in PCB detection in Big Spring Creek. The 2014 fish tissue samples showed PCB levels were low and do not warrant “do not eat” restrictions. As such there is no need to preclude harvest of fish from Big Spring Creek on the basis of human health risk.

Despite successful clean-up, public sentiment favors maintaining catch- and-release angling for trout in this area, a regulation we propose to maintain. Northern Pike, Yellow Perch and Mountain Whitefish occur in low abundance locally in this drainage, and are most likely the species of fish that would be harvested with this regulation change.

Walleye limit correction for Hauser Reservoir. Q66

Page 60

HAUSER RESERVOIR

Including Canyon Ferry Dam tailwater and Lake Helena

Combined Trout and Salmon: 5 trout and salmon daily and in combination and 10 trout and salmon in possession in any combination.

Northern Pike: no Limit.

Walleye: *20 daily 12 daily, only 1 over 25 inches*. Possession limit is *40 fish, only 2 over 25 inches* twice the daily limit.

Yellow Perch: 10 daily and in possession, except from April 1through June 30, only 1 fish daily and in possession, 14 inch maximum.

Catch-and-release for Brown Trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* and younger may

Take 1 Brown Trout daily and in possession, any size.

Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with 2 hooks per line through the ice only.

RATIONALE: This change corrects a misprint in the 2015 regulation booklet.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Remove Sauger from species lists for spearing in regulation exceptions for Lake Elwell aka Tiber Reservoir, Tiber Reservoir aka Lake Elwell, and Lake Frances. Q67

Page 61

LAKE ELWELL aka Tiber Reservoir

Cisco and Whitefish: all fish must be released immediately or killed and counted as part of your limit. It is unlawful to possess live Cisco or Whitefish for any reason.

Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with 2 hooks per line through the ice.

Spearing: open for non-game fish, northern pike, walleye, ~~sauger~~ and burbot (ling) through the ice and by persons swimming or submerged.

LAKE FRANCES

Closed entire year around the water supply outlet as posted.

Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with 2 hooks per line through the ice.

Spearing: open for non-game fish, northern pike, walleye, ~~sauger~~ and burbot (ling) through the ice and by persons swimming or submerged.

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TIBER RESERVOIR aka Lake Elwell

Cisco and Whitefish: all fish must be released immediately or killed and counted as part of your limit. It is unlawful to possess live Cisco or Whitefish for any reason.

Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with 2 hooks per line through the ice.

Spearing: open for non-game fish, northern pike, walleye, ~~sauger~~ and burbot (ling) through the ice and by persons swimming or submerged.

RATIONALE: Sauger are no longer found in Lake Elwell (Tiber Reservoir). Sauger do not occur in Lake Frances. Listing Sauger among species approved for spearing in these waters implies that Sauger are present. Removing Sauger from the regulations would more accurately identify the fish species likely to be taken by spearing.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Increase Smallmouth Bass harvest limits on the Missouri River from Morony Dam to Fort Benton.
Q68

Page 65

MISSOURI RIVER

Morony Dam to Fort Benton

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, *only 2* ~~only 1~~ may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, *only 4* ~~only 2~~ may be Sauger (NOTE: The proposed Sauger Walleye change is detailed elsewhere)
Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with up to 6 hooks per line all year.

Smallmouth bass: 10 daily and in possession

RATIONALE: FWP finds Smallmouth Bass are the most abundant game species sampled in this reach of river during electrofishing surveys. Anglers also report high catch rates while targeting bass, and incidental to angling for other species.

FWP stocked this reach of river with smallmouth bass from 1994-1999. The present population represents the success of this stocking and likely expansion of smallmouth bass from Fort Peck Reservoir. Increasing the Bass harvest limit provides new opportunity for anglers. The Sauger/Walleye proposal for this reach of river, included here as well, is detailed separately elsewhere.

Change Sauger limits for Sauger/Walleye Combinations on the Marias River and the Missouri River from Morony Dam to Fort Benton – Central Fishing District locations. Q69

Page 62

MARIAS RIVER

Open entire year downstream from the I-15 Bridge.

Combined Trout: 5 daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches.

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, *only 2* ~~only 1~~ may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, *only 4* ~~only 2~~ may be Sauger

Whitefish 35 daily and in possession.

Hook and Line/Setlines: 2 lines with up to 2 hooks per line all year.

Page 65

MISSOURI RIVER

Morony Dam to Fort Benton

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, *only 2* ~~only 1~~ may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, *only 4* ~~only 2~~ may be Sauger

Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with up to 6 hooks per line all year.

RATIONALE: Sauger regulations have been very restrictive for 15 years. Population data from the Missouri River now suggest increased Sauger abundance and long term population stability. The regulation change would allow slightly more Sauger harvest opportunity for anglers on the Missouri and also serve to help match Sauger limits with the Marias and Missouri Rivers in the Eastern Fishing District. Uniformity of regulation aids angler understanding and compliance.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~striketrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

EASTERN DISTRICT – Region 4

Change Sauger limits for Sauger/Walleye Combinations on the Judith River - Eastern Fishing District locations. Q70

New Exception

JUDITH RIVER (from Hwy 81 downstream to mouth)

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, **only 2** ~~only 1~~ may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, **only 4** ~~only 2~~ may be Sauger

RATIONALE: Sauger /Walleye regulations on the Judith River are currently the standard regulation for the Eastern Fishing District: 5 daily and 10 in possession. This regulation proposal would be slightly more restrictive of Sauger harvest opportunity, but would also standardize Sauger/Walleye limits with the Missouri River in the Eastern District. Sauger occur in low abundance in the lower portions of the Judith River. Slightly less angler opportunity is offset by the benefits of regulation uniformity that aids angler understanding and compliance.

Change Sauger limits for Sauger/Walleye Combinations on the Missouri River upstream from Fort Peck Dam to Beauchamp Creek and CMR Trail 837 – Eastern Fishing District locations. Q71

Page 83

FORT PECK RESERVOIR

Fort Peck Dam to Beauchamp Creek and CMR Trail 837

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, **only 2** ~~only 1~~ may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, **only 4** ~~only 2~~ may be Sauger.

Spearing: In addition to the standard regulations, Chinook Salmon and Lake Trout may be taken by spear or gig through the ice December 1 through March 31.

Snagging: allowed only for Chinook Salmon from October 1 through November 30.

RATIONALE: A change in the Sauger harvest number is proposed for the Missouri River upstream of Fort Peck Reservoir and the Musselshell River. This regulation would standardize the harvest limit with these other waters. Increasing the Sauger harvest limit on Fort Peck Reservoir would provide more opportunity for the public to harvest an additional Sauger in Fort Peck Reservoir. Regulation uniformity aids angler understanding and compliance.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Change Sauger limits for Sauger/Walleye Combinations on the Marias River and the Missouri River upstream from Fort Peck Dam to Fort Benton – Eastern Fishing District locations. Q72

Page 83

MARIAS RIVER

Open entire year downstream from the Hwy 223 Bridge.

Combined Trout: 5 daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches.

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, **only 2** ~~only 1~~ may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, **only 4** ~~only 2~~ may be Sauger

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MISSOURI RIVER

Upstream from Fort Peck Dam to Fort Benton

Paddlefish snagging: open for harvesting Paddlefish from May 1 to June 15 from 6 AM to 9 PM MST, daily unless closed earlier by FWP.

Catch-and-release snagging for Paddlefish is open from May 1 to June 15 from 6 AM to 9 PM MST, daily. See Special Paddlefish Regulations (pages 79-81) for additional important Paddlefish information.

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, **only 2** ~~only 1~~ may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, **only 4** ~~only 2~~ may be Sauger

Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with up to 6 hooks per line all year.

RATIONALE: Sauger regulations have been very restrictive for 15 years. Population data from the Missouri River now suggest increased Sauger abundance and long term population stability. The regulation change would allow slightly more Sauger harvest opportunity for anglers on the Missouri and also serve to help match Sauger limits with the Marias and Missouri Rivers in the Central Fishing District. Uniformity of regulation aids angler understanding and compliance.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

CENTRAL DISTRICT – Region 5

Change bait specifications: Allow minnow collection in tributaries of the Clarks Fork. Q74

Page 49

Live Bait

**Fathead Minnow, Flathead Chub, Western Silvery Minnow, Plains Minnow, Emerald Shiner, Longnose Dace, Lake Chub, Creek Chub, Longnose Sucker, and White Sucker.* ~~Live non-game fish~~ may be used as *live fish* bait only in the following waters:

Bighorn Lake and Afterbay Reservoir

Bighorn River – Afterbay Dam to cable 600 feet downstream, and downstream from the Bighorn FAS.

Clarks Fork Yellowstone River *and tributaries* – downstream from the bridge at Bridger

Marias River and tributaries downstream from I-15

Missouri River downstream from Morony Dam

Muddy Creek Drainage near Vaughn, including all streams and drainage canals

Teton River and tributaries downstream from I-15

Tiber Reservoir (Lake Elwell), Toole, and Liberty counties.

Yellowstone River and all streams and ditches in the drainage downstream from the mouth of the Clarks Fork (except the section of the Bighorn River between the cable 600 feet downstream from Afterbay Dam and the Bighorn FAS).

RATIONALE: This regulation allows anglers to legally collect minnows from tributary streams along this section of the Clarks Fork. It is a clarification for anglers that it is legal to fish with or collect minnows from tributary streams and ditches along this section of the Clarks Fork that is already open to fishing with minnows as bait. Live bait fish species allowed will now also be specified.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Increase Bass harvest limit at Bighorn Lake and Afterbay Reservoir. Specify catfish.Q75

Page 55

BIGHORN LAKE AND AFTERBAY RESERVOIR

Bass: **10 daily and 20 in possession** ~~6 daily and 12 in possession.~~

Shovelnose Sturgeon: 2 daily and in possession.

Sauger/Walleye: 6 daily (only 3 may be Sauger) and 12 in possession (only 3 may be Sauger)

Channel Catfish: 6 daily and in possession.

Burbot (ling): 3 daily and in possession.

Hook and Line: 2 lines with 2 hooks per line on open water and 6 lines with 1 hook per line through the ice.

Anglers obtaining live bait in Montana may use them only in the Montana portion of the lake.

RATIONALE. This regulation change would allow increased harvest for abundant bass and potentially improve bass size structure and reduce competition with other species.

Designating Channel Catfish clearly identifies the species that is the intended subject of the catfish regulation.

Change Kokanee Salmon snagging season description for Deadmans Basin Reservoir. Q76

Page 58

DEADMANS BASIN RESERVOIR

Combined Trout: 10 daily and in possession.

Snagging: open for salmon October 1 through December 31 ~~through the ice only~~, 35 daily and 70 in possession.

RATIONALE. Current regulations only allow salmon snagging through the ice at Deadmans Basin reservoir. In recent years safe ice has not been forming here until mid-December or later and by then many of the spawning salmon are dead or so soft they have lost their value as food. The proposed regulation change would allow anglers to take advantage of this resource while the salmon are still in good condition. This change has the added benefit that it might also reduce some temptation for anglers to venture out too early on to unsafe ice under current regulations that allow snagging only through ice.

Eliminate Lightning Creek exception. Q77

Page 61

LIGHTNING CREEK (Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness)

~~Open August 1 through November 30.~~

RATIONALE: This proposal removes an unnecessary regulation exception. The current season exception was put in place to protect spawning Golden Trout moving out of Lightning Lake in early summer. Angling pressure is low at Lightning Lake and its vicinity, primarily due to difficult access. The seasonal protection is unneeded. Lightning Creek regulations would revert instead to the Central Fishing District standard for Rivers and Streams.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Reduce number of Sauger allowed in the Sauger/Walleye combined harvest limit in portions of the Yellowstone River. Revert to 2 new Central Fishing District Standards: Open all year and Combined Trout Limit to include 1 cutthroat. Q78

Page 72

YELLOWSTONE RIVER

Yellowstone national Park (YNP) Boundary to I-90 Bridge at Billings

~~Open entire year.~~

~~Combined Trout: 4 Brown Trout and/or Rainbow Trout daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches. Catch and release for cutthroat trout.~~

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, only 1 may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, only 2 may be Sauger, includes tributary streams.

RATIONALE: The current Sauger/Walleye limit for the Yellowstone River in the Central Fishing District is 5 daily and 10 in possession. The Sauger fishery is re-establishing, with ongoing efforts to improve fish passage and to increase population monitoring in the middle sections of the Yellowstone River. More limited harvest regulations are needed to help protect Sauger as this fishery rebuilds. The current proposal extends the existing, more conservative Sauger/Walleye harvest limit for the Yellowstone River in the Eastern Fishing District upstream into the Central Fishing District, including tributary streams. Lower harvest limits extended into tributaries are important especially to limit harvest in the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone if a Sauger run can be reestablished in that river system as well.

Existing regulations shown as deleted here are both unneeded if updates to the Central Fishing District standards are adopted District Wide. These changes are discussed separately, elsewhere.

EASTERN DISTRICT – Region 5

Reduce harvest limits for Sauger/Walleye Combined limits in the Musselshell River. Q79

New Exception

MUSSELHELL RIVER

From the Highway 3 bridge at Lavina downstream to Fort Peck Reservoir

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, only 2 may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, only 4 may be Sauger.

RATIONALE: The current Sauger/Walleye combined limit for the Musselshell River is the District standard 5 daily and 10 in possession in both the Central and the Eastern Fishing Districts. There is no reference to species count in this regulation, so currently, all 5 fish could be a Sauger. The proposal limits Sauger harvest to 2 each day. This change would also bring the Musselshell and Fort Peck Reservoir Sauger/Walleye limits into agreement, thus eliminating a potential boundary confusion.

Active fisheries conservation efforts, including improving fish passage, enhancing habitat, increasing monitoring, and potentially restocking native fish such as Sauger and Channel Catfish in the upper river, are ongoing now to reestablish native fish runs in the Musselshell River. The proposed regulation changes reduce harvest limits slightly, to protect and support fish production during the rebuilding process.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

EASTERN DISTRICT – Region 6

Delete exceptions for Bearpaw Lake and Beaver Creek Reservoir. Revert to Eastern Fishing District standard. Q81

Page 83

BEARPAW LAKE

~~Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession—~~

BEAVER CREEK RESERVOIR

~~Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession—~~

RATIONALE: Reduced daily and possession limit on trout have had no effect on annual trout densities (other variables have been found to influence this, not harvest). Anglers have expressed confusion and frustration with the current trout regulations set at both reservoirs. Trout harvest limits would revert to the Eastern Fishing District standard: Combined Trout, 5 daily and 10 in possession, includes Cutthroat Trout. Uniformity of regulation where possible aids angler understanding and compliance.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Paddlefish harvest lottery draw. Q82

Page 80

Missouri River upstream from Fort Peck Dam to Fort Benton (White Tag)

~~*The Paddlefish fishery is managed under an annual harvest target not to exceed 500 fish. FWP may close the harvest season within 24 hours notice in any year if it appears the harvest target may be exceeded. Catch and release fishing would continue for the duration of the season. For current information on harvest status call the Glasgow FWP office at 406-228-3700. A Paddlefish harvest hotline is available with up-to-date harvest counts and Missouri River flow information.~~

**Paddlefish harvest only tags will be available via lottery draw for the Upper Missouri River paddlefish season (White Tag) only. Anglers need to apply individually or as a party (up to five people) before April 1st. Applications can be submitted either on-line at <http://fwp.mt.gov>, at an FWP office or mailed (must be postmarked no later than April 1st) Successful applicants will be allowed to fish from May 1 to June 15 and can harvest one paddlefish; harvested paddlefish must be immediately tagged. Unsuccessful applicants will be issued a free paddlefish conservation license that will allow them to participate in the paddlefish catch and release season on the Upper Missouri River that will run concurrent with the harvest season (May1-June15). All Paddlefish caught during the catch and release season must be released immediately and may not be gaffed or lifted out of the water. Captured fish must remain at least partially submerged in water at all times (to avoid injury to the fish).*

**Paddlefish anglers can participate in only one paddlefish season per year. For example, if an angler is unsuccessful in drawing a paddlefish tag for the Upper Missouri River paddlefish season (White Tag) he/she cannot purchase a tag to fish the Yellowstone River paddlefish season (Yellow Tag).*

~~*Paddlefish snagging: open to harvesting Paddlefish from May 1 to June 15 (unless closed earlier by FWP) from 6 AM to 9 PM (MST) daily. An unused white Paddlefish tag is required. All Paddlefish captured must either be tagged and kept, or released immediately.~~

~~*Catch and release snagging for Paddlefish is open from May 1 to June 15. Proof of purchase of a white Paddlefish tag on your fishing license is required for catch and release fishing. All Paddlefish must be released immediately and may not be gaffed or lifted out of the water. Captured fish must remain at least partially submerged in water at all times (to avoid injury to the fish).~~

RATIONALE: A lottery type drawing system will aid in lengthening the current harvest season while distributing harvest and pressure over a greater number of days. This regulation would alleviate current crowding issues and allow anglers to plan their trips in advance rather than the current scenario where anglers must rapidly travel to the Fred Robinson Bridge area as soon as the season opens or when fish begin to migrate because of river flow cues. Under current regulations, if an angler is unable to fish the first couple weekends, their opportunity to harvest a paddlefish is likely gone because the harvest quota will already have been met.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

EASTERN DISTRICT – Region 7

Live bait specifications: Tongue River and Tongue River Reservoir Q8

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TONGUE RIVER

Tongue River Reservoir to Wyoming State Border

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily (only 1 may be a Sauger) and 10 in possession (only 2 may be a Sauger).

Fish species allowed for use as live bait are: Fathead Minnow, Flathead Chub, Longnose Dace, Lake Chub, Creek Chub, White Sucker and Longnose Sucker.

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TONGUE RIVER RESERVOIR

Crappie: 30 daily and 60 in possession.

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily (only 1 may be a Sauger) and 10 in possession (only 2 may be a Sauger).

Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with 6 hooks per line through the ice.

Fish species allowed for use as live bait are: Fathead Minnow, Flathead Chub, Longnose Dace, Lake Chub, Creek Chub, White Sucker, and Longnose sucker.

RATIONALE: The variety of live bait-fish species and public sources for collection or purchase are very limited upstream of Tongue River Reservoir dam. This circumstance results in anglers and vendors transporting live bait species from other areas (Yellowstone River) including species not established upstream of Tongue River Reservoir dam. Clearly identifying what fish can be used as bait reduces the risk of introducing a new species into Tongue River Reservoir and Tongue River upstream of the reservoir.

The list of potential threats is substantial. All of the following fish species are used as bait or are commonly captured along with other bait species: Goldeye, Bigmouth Buffalo, Smallmouth Buffalo, Freshwater Drum, Emerald Shiner, Western Silvery Minnow, Plains Minnow, Sand Shiner and River Carpsucker. None are established in Tongue River Reservoir at this time. Introduction and establishment of any of these species could cause irreversible damage to the current fisheries, especially the abundant and popular crappie fishery.

Note: New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.